

SOCIETY AT THE  
NATIONAL CAPITAL.

By GRACE PORTER HOPKINS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., December 24.—Kris Kringle, Jack Frost and the Snow King have been holding high carnival in Washington this week, and with their joint efforts have succeeded in making the 1904 Christmas one long to be remembered. With out hand, the Snow King painted pretty pictures in park and thoroughfare, on bush and tree, as a background for the merry shoppers, while Jack Frost nipped fingers and toes, just enough to make the spirit of Kris Kringle necessary to keep everybody happy.

Following the "holiest work of the skies," came the merry jangle of sleigh bells mingled with shouts and laughter of boys and girls with their sleds, or those engaged in the equally strenuous waiting and telling each other, in fact, everybody, old or young, seems bent upon enjoying to the full an unusually white Christmas.

At the White House, at Secretary of War Taft's and in many other homes where children dwell, the snow man is a holiday institution, his presence being allowed to commemorate the record breaking fall of eleven inches of snow in a single week at the Capital.

Kodak parties are suddenly the fashion, and groups of young people go to one artistic institution or another, "snapping" each other silhouetted against a background of purest white.

While enjoying these rare pleasures of a New England Yuletide, Washingtonians have not forgotten the more familiar holiday festivities that are characteristic of the Southern States.

For those who delight to "trip the light fantastic," the sixty Couple Cotillon, danced at the New Willard Hotel on the night of the twenty-first, was not only an excellent excuse for a party, but by card only, and those bits of pastebord were sent to none save the socially select, who have been such a right of birth for several generations, while to seek an invitation thereto is a great honor, and known to Washington ways, and to forever place yourself outside the pale of forgiveness in that particular set.

At the White House Christmas has meant the gathering of the clan. The Roosevelt family came home from school, and the big Roosevelts are still arriving from everywhere, to participate in the social affairs of the mid-winter season. Especially will they be in evidence at the big New Year's day reception given by the President to the Diplomatic Corps, to government officials and finally to the public.

A feature of the Christmas day at the White House is the distribution of gifts among the employees by the President and his family. This pretty custom was adopted so many administrations ago that none of the present-day actors in the national drama was present at its christening, and only tradition can fix the date of its birth. Some say that it is as old as the White House itself, and some declare that Old Hickory was the first Executive to substantially respond to the "Christmas Gift" salutation of his subordinates.

Washington never seems more cosmopolitan than at this season, when the touch of the Yuletide spirit is apparently all that is needed to make the whole world akin. The children of the Chinese legation, with their queues tucked in the back of their flowing robes, enjoy with a gusto, the Yankee toys of their American guests, while the English-dressed boys of the Legation, the Turkish Minister, plead for the privilege of hanging up their stockings in a la their Washington friends, "in the hope that St. Nicholas soon will be there."

Christmas, commemorating the birth of the "Sun of Righteousness" may have a pagan member of the diplomatic corps as a next door neighbor, and the latter be equally zealous in celebrating the "Sun of the Sun" in which the sun begins its return trip carrying sunshine to all the world.

The Saturnalia was first blended with the Christian festival in Rome, in the days of Constantine the Good, and so to-day, and the Italian Ambassador and his wife are gracious hosts, and have their guests welcome around the Yule log brightly burning in an open fireplace, that looked particularly cheerful, when the mercury was firing with degrees below zero outside. A large urn full of gifts was placed on a table and the guests had great sport finding their gifts, while they listened to the following legend as to the filling:

When the wise men of the East were following the Star of Bethlehem in search of the Child Jesus, they came to the house of an old woman, Befana, by name. "We are going," they said to find the Christ Child. "We have seen his Star in the East and it is leading us to the presents we are taking him."

"Will you go with us?"

The old woman saw the beautiful Star, thought of her unfinished tasks, and replied that if they would wait until her work was done she would be glad to go with them for she too wished to see the holy babe. The wise men could not wait, and the old woman went back to her work, thinking meanwhile of the babe and the star. When the Star was gone and there was nothing to guide her to the manger, she is still trying to find the Star, and since she cannot give her gift, she carries the Christ-child himself, she carried them

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